

SELECTIONS FROM *THE SOCIAL CONTRACT* (1762)
Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)
(Primary Source)

Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. Many a one believes himself the master of others, and yet he is a greater slave than they.

... [T]he social order is a sacred right which serves as a foundation for all others ... now, as men cannot create any new forces, but only combine and direct those that exist, they have no other means of self-preservation than to form...a sum of forces which may overcome the resistance, to put them in action ... and to make them work in concert.

This sum of forces can be produced only by the combination of man; but the strength and freedom of each man being the chief instruments of his preservation, how can he pledge them without injuring himself, and without neglecting the cares which he owes to himself? This difficulty, applied to my subject, may be expressed in these terms:

'To find a form of association which may defend and protect with the whole force of the community the person and property of all its members and by means of which each, coalescing with all, may nevertheless obey only himself, and remain as free as before. Such is the fundamental problem of which the social contract furnishes the solution.'



Jean Jacques Rousseau

In short, each giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody. . .

We see from this formula that the act of association contains a reciprocal engagement between the public and individuals, and that every individual . . . is engaged in a double relation. . . .

. . . the social pact . . . includes this engagement . . . that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the whole body; which means nothing else than that he shall be forced to be free. . . .

Source: Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Henry J. Tozer, trans. (London, 1895).